**DOCUMENT RESUME**

ED 042 398 FL 001 937

| | |
|---|---|
| AUTHOR | Beanblossom, Gary F. |
| TITLE | The Effects of Various Types of Delays on College Foreign Language Achievement. |
| INSTITUTION | Washington Univ., Seattle. Bureau of Testing. |
| REPORT NO | P-0269-119c |
| PUB DATE | Jun 70 |
| NOTE | 10p. |
| EDRS PRICE | EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.60 |
| DESCRIPTORS | *Academic Achievement, Achievement Rating, Articulation (Program), Class Average, French, German, Grade Point Average, Grades (Scholastic), *Language Instruction, *Modern Languages, Spanish, Student Evaluation, *Success Factors, Tables (Data), *Undergraduate Study |

ABSTRACT

Language history profiles of 2,367 students receiving grades in freshman and sophomore level foreign language courses in French, German, and Spanish at the University of Washington during the autumn quarter of 1968 were identified and compared. The language history profiles were categorized by types of delays and interruptions experienced by students as they progressed from high school to college language studies. Discussion of types of delays, courses, distribution of groups by language, hypothesis and method, and results are included. Differences in grade point average (G.P.A.) between four groups for each of 16 language courses are presented in three tables. (Author/RL).

ED042398

POOR ORIGINAL COPY - BEST
AVAILABLE AT TIME FILMED

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

Bureau of Testing

University of Washington

June 1970

# The Effects of Various Types of Delays on College Foreign Language Achievement

Gary F. Beanblossom

Four language history profiles are identified for over 2,000 students enrolled in UW lower-division foreign language courses in French, German, and Spanish during Autumn Quarter 1968: (A) entering freshmen who studied a language in the twelfth grade; (B) entering freshmen who did not study a language in the twelfth grade; (C) students who had taken at least one previous college language course; (D) students with previous college experience taking their first college course. Differences in GPA were statistically tested for sixteen courses. A's do better than B's in German 101, 102, and 201; B's do better in German 103. In Spanish 102 and 103 B's are slightly better, but A's are superior at the upper levels. The long-range effects of a delay in high school seem less injurious in French than German or Spanish; indeed, in French B's are generally superior. In practically every course where N's are large enough to be reliable, C's perform rather dismally, especially in 200-level courses, most notably Spanish. The poor showing of C's may be due to factors inherent in the course placement criteria or a lack of cumulativeness in the structure of the course sequences. Relative to other groups, D's acquit themselves admirably at the lower-level courses.

Language history profiles of 2,367 students receiving grades in freshman and sophomore level foreign languages courses in French, German, and Spanish at the University of Washington during Autumn Quarter 1968 were identified and compared on foreign language course grades. The language history profiles were categorized by types of delays and interruptions experienced by students as they progress from high school to college language studies. The foreign

FL 001 437

---

This research was funded by the Washington Foreign Language Program through the auspices of the Bureau of Testing, Project 0269-119c.

POOR ORIGINAL COPY - BEST
AVAILABLE AT TIME FILMED

ED042398

language graduation requirement in the College of Arts and Sciences, since discontinued, had much to do with the sizeable number of students engaged in language studies.

Types of Delays. Four groups were defined: (a) Group A includes students entering the University for the first time directly from high school who took a language course during their first quarter at the University, and had a language course in the twelfth grade; (b) Group B includes students entering the University for the first time directly from high school who took a language course during their first quarter at the University and did not have a language course in the twelfth grade; (c) Group C includes students who previously completed at least one college language course, in the great majority of cases the earlier course(s) in the sequence constituting the graduation requirement; (d) Group D, numerically the smallest of the four groups, includes students with previous college experience who are taking their first college language course.

Courses. The freshman level courses in all three languages, numbered 101, 102, and 103, deal with methods and objectives that are primarily oral-aural. The sophomore level triad, 201, 202, and 203 (222 in French), affords a systematic review of grammar (in 201), and extensive practice in reading and writing. French 222 moves into the realm of critical reading ability, required material for more advanced courses in French literature. German 203 and Spanish 101 were excluded from the analysis because of small numbers. Students are placed into these courses via tests administered upon entrance to the University, except when transferring with some language background from another institution. Others, because of insufficient high school preparation, long delays, or a desire to change languages, have chosen to start at the beginning of a sequence. However, the overwhelming percentage inaugurated their language

POOR ORIGINAL COPY - BEST
AVAILABLE AT TIME FILMED

course work after taking a placement test.

Distributions of Groups by Language. Groups A, B, and C are roughly equal in size, each ranging between 28 per cent and 34 per cent of the total. Group D contains about 9.5 per cent. There are some noteworthy differences in the distribution of groups by language as the following tabulation makes apparent (percentages in parentheses):

| | Group A | Group B | Group C | Group D | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| French | 267 (29.1) | 331 (36.1) | 246 (26.8) | 73 (8.0) | 917 (100.0) |
| German | 222 (26.4) | 244 (29.0) | 294 (34.9) | 82 (9.7) | 842 (100.0) |
| Spanish | 184 (30.3) | 222 (36.5) | 133 (21.9) | 69 (11.3) | 608 (100.0) |
| Totals | 673 (28.4) | 797 (33.7) | 673 (28.4) | 224 (9.5) | 2367 (100.0) |

Since past placement practices have delegated a much higher proportion of German students than French or Spanish students to the lower-level courses, it follows that German students, on the average, will be required to take more courses to fulfill the graduation requirement. Hence there is a greater proportion of German students who have taken the previous course in the sequence (35 per cent) than French (27 per cent) or Spanish (22 per cent). This is primarily compensated by a smaller percentage of German students who have entered directly from high school with a delay (Group B). Group A and Group D percentages are relatively stable by language.

Hypothesis and Method. This paper statistically tests for significant differences in GPA between the four groups for each of the sixteen language courses. A one-way analysis of variance is performed (Blalock, pp. 242-253), with the results presented in Tables 1, 2, and 3 for French, German, and Spanish, respectively.

Results. In comparing Groups A and B, the high school non-delays and delays, it is quickly evident that delays (B's) typically initiate their studies at a much earlier point in the course sequence. This occurs simply because they

are outperformed by A's on language placement tests. The French data in Table 1 suggest that the liabilities of a delay, aside from low initial placement, are ephemeral at worst. The language skills eroded by a delay are quickly recovered as empirically witnessed by the fact B's achieve higher mean grades that A's at each course level with a sufficiently large N, except 222.

The results, however, are much more mixed in German and Spanish. In German 102 A's are decidedly superior to B's, but the reverse is true in 103. A's also have a slight edge over B's in 101 and 201. In the Spanish oral-aural courses, 102 and 103, the high school delays do slightly better. Yet in the grammar-reading-writing courses in Spanish, students who studied Spanish in the twelfth grade have an advantage over those who did not, especially in the 201 grammar course. Thus the long-range effects of a language delay in high school seem less injurious in French than in Spanish or German.

The most eye-opening finding is the shabby GPA attainments of Group C, students who have had at least one of the preceding college courses in the language sequence. The only exception is French 103 where C's excel relative to the other three groups; that is, performance in French 103 is enhanced by having taken 102. In practically every other course where N's are reasonably sizeable C's perform rather dismally.

In the French 200-sequence courses C's consistently attain lower mean grades than A's and B's, except for 201 where they do about the same as A's. Many students progressing through the sequence experience difficulty when arriving at 202 and 222--mean GPA's are only 2.32 and 2.21, respectively, considerably below A and B attainments. Differences are statistically significant at the 202 level. Since tests of significance are grossly sensitive to the number of observations, it is plausible that significance would have

been attained at the 222 level, given a slightly larger sample.

Among German courses the same trend can be observed--C's are inferior to A's and B's at the 103, 201, and 202 levels. Some of the N's are quite small and the lone statistically significant finding occurs in 201.

The subnormal standing of students who took an earlier course in the sequence is nowhere more acute than in Spanish. In 201, 202, and 203 C's do very poorly, as seen from Table 3 data. In 202 their mean GPA is only 2.08, compared with 2.91 for the high school non-delays and 2.84 for the high school delays, a statistically significant finding at the .001 level. Whereas A's and B's, though numerically scarce, achieve better than a B average in Spanish 203, C's languish far behind with 2.54. They also compare unfavorably at the 201 level. Differences between the three groups are very slight in 103.

How might these findings be explained?

1. Students with less distinguished high school records are usually placed lower in the sequence of courses and for any given quarter are apt to be overrepresented among C's, since they are required to take more courses before completing the sequence. Similarly, A's and B's who place higher in the sequence are generally high grade achievers in high school. Since motivation plays such an essential part in grade achievement, the most highly motivated A's and B's and the least motivated C's may be found in the 200-level courses. This would explain the sizeable mean differences in GPA between these groups at the higher levels.
2. The ascending course levels may not be structured in a way that yields highly cumulative knowledge. For example, a student who has thoroughly absorbed 201 subject matter may not enjoy any

POOR ORIGINAL COPY - BEST
AVAILABLE AT TIME FILMED

special advantage in 202 over a student who has only digested fragmentary knowledge of 201, other things being equal.

3. Students entering the University directly from high school may have been initially placed too low in the sequence. However, other research findings cast doubt on this proposition. For instance, students expressing dissatisfaction with their placement more commonly feel they were placed too high (Beanblossom, 1970).

In view of the cessation of the foreign language graduation requirement in Autumn Quarter 1969, there is no guarantee that these group differences will persist assuming that students voluntarily electing to take language courses constitute a more selective group.

The procrastinators, Group D, though few in number and concentrated in the lower-level courses, seem to acquit themselves very admirably--in 101 and 102 courses they are the highest achieving group.

POOR ORIGINAL COPY - BEST
AVAILABLE AT TIME FILMED

Table 1

Mean GPA's, N's, and F-ratios for Groups A, B, C, D (defined above) for French 101, 102, 103, 201, 202, 222

| | Group A | Group B | Group C | Group D | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| French 101 | | | | | |
| Means | 2.50 | 2.40 | --- | 2.87 | F=1.21* |
| N | 4 | 10 | — | 23 | |
| French 102 | | | | | |
| Means | 2.20 | 2.47 | 2.00 | 2.60 | F=1.63* |
| N | 45 | 132 | 3 | 15 | |
| French 103 | | | | | |
| Means | 2.15 | 2.38 | 2.62 | 2.33 | F=1.86* |
| N | 47 | 82 | 45 | 15 | |
| French 201 | | | | | |
| Means | 2.32 | 2.67 | 2.35 | 2.20 | F=1.79* |
| N | 68 | 57 | 49 | 15 | |
| French 202 | | | | | |
| Means | 2.60 | 2.62 | 2.32 | 1.60 | F=3.05** |
| N | 65 | 34 | 107 | 5 | |
| French 222 | | | | | |
| Means | 2.66 | 2.50 | 2.21 | ----- | F=2.22* |
| N | 38 | 16 | 42 | -- | |

**-Statistically significant at .05 level.
*-Not significant at .05 level.

POOR ORIGINAL COPY - BEST AVAILABLE AT TIME FILMED

Table 2

Mean GPA's, N's, and F-ratios for Groups A, B, C, D (defined above) for German 101, 102, 103, 201, 202

| | Group A | Group B | Group C | Group D | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| German 101 | | | | | |
| Means | 2.82 | 2.72 | ---- | 3.02 | F=1.91* |
| N | 33 | 113 | -- | 54 | |
| German 102 | | | | | |
| Means | 2.75 | 2.49 | 2.86 | 3.00 | F=1.88* |
| N | 56 | 57 | 7 | 20 | |
| German 103 | | | | | |
| Means | 2.42 | 2.61 | 2.17 | 3.00 | F= <1* |
| N | 71 | 46 | 12 | 1 | |
| German 201 | | | | | |
| Means | 2.79 | 2.63 | 2.46 | 1.80 | F=2.66** |
| N | 48 | 19 | 196 | 5 | |
| German 202 | | | | | |
| Means | 2.62 | 2.89 | 2.54 | 3.50 | F= <1* |
| N | 13 | 9 | 71 | 2 | |

**-Statistically significant at .05 level.
*-Not significant at .05 level.

POOR ORIGINAL COPY - BEST
AVAILABLE AT TIME FILMED

Table 3

Mean GPA's, N's, and F-ratios for Groups A, B, C, D (defined above) for Spanish 102, 103, 201, 202, 203

| | Group A | Group B | Group C | Group D | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Spanish 102 | | | | | |
| Means | 2.30 | 2.38 | 2.50 | 2.79 | F=1.05* |
| N | 33 | 112 | 2 | 19 | |
| Spanish 103 | | | | | |
| Means | 2.17 | 2.39 | 2.14 | 2.23 | F=<1* |
| N | 30 | 28 | 28 | 13 | |
| Spanish 201 | | | | | |
| Means | 2.67 | 2.47 | 2.15 | 2.30 | F=2.39* |
| N | 49 | 38 | 27 | 10 | |
| Spanish 202 | | | | | |
| Means | 2.91 | 2.84 | 2.08 | 2.63 | F=8.01** |
| N | 58 | 32 | 48 | 8 | |
| Spanish 203 | | | | | |
| Means | 3.29 | 3.11 | 2.54 | 4.00 | F=2.75* |
| N | 14 | 9 | 28 | 1 | |

**-Statistically significant at .001 level.
*-Not significant at .05 level.

## References

Beanblossom, G. F. Student evaluation of foreign language placement. Seattle: Bureau of Testing, University of Washington, 1970. (Duplicated report)

Blalock, H. M. Social statistics. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1960.

POOR ORIGINAL COPY - BEST
AVAILABLE AT TIME FILMED